

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 SSM-03 IO-13
SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2948
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, XF
SUBJECT: REACTION TO CLINTON REMARKS: GOE AND PNC

REF: CAIRO 4694

SUMMARY. CAIRO PRESS MARCH 19 CARRIES FIRST OFFICIAL
AND PRESS REACTION TO CLINTON REMARKS, PRAISING PRESIDENT
CARTER'S INNOVATIVE AND PERSONAL INTEREST IN ME AS
DEMONSTRATED BY HIS SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIAN HOMELAND.
PALESTINIANS ARE MORE CAUTIOUS. MODERATE DELEGATES
TO PNC WELCOME STATEMENT, BUT WORRY WHY PRESIDENT USED
WORD "REFUGEES", WONDER WHERE PRESIDENT BELIEVES HOME-
LAND SHOULD BE, AND FEAR USG WILL NOT FOLLOW THROUGH
(WITH ISRAEL) ON ITS "NEW" POLICY. END SUMMARY.
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1. CAIRO PRESS MARCH 19 PROVIDES FIRST COMMENTARIES
ON PRESIDENT CARTER'S ENDORSEMENT OF HOMELAND FOR
PALESTINIAN REFUGEES. TONE OF COMMENTARIES IS
CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM. SHARP ISRAELI REACTION IS FRONT-
PAGE NEWS. AKHBAR BANNERS: "CARTER SHAKES HANDS
WITH REPRESENTATIVE OF PALESTINE."

2. GUMHURIYYA DIPLOMATIC EDITOR QUOTED OFFICIAL CIRCLES (I.E., MFA) AS MAKING FOLLOWING COMMENT: IT IS NOW CLEAR U.S. PRESIDENT IS PLAYING PERSONAL AND INNOVATIVE ROLE MOTIVATED BY HIS EXTREME INTEREST IN ME ISSUE. FURTHER, PRESIDENT ADOPTS "EXPLICIT STANDS". FOR EXAMPLE, HIS STATEMENT ON HOMELAND IS CONSONANT WITH JANUARY 1977 EC DECLARATION (PUBLISHED IN AHAM FEBRUARY 21, 1977. SINCE WE DO NOT KNOW IF AHAM TEXT IS AUTHENTIC, WE ARE UNABLE TO COMMENT. COULD DEPARTMENT PROVIDE US WITH EC TEXT?). AHAM NOTES THAT "RESPONSIBLE CIRCLES" HAVE OBSERVED THAT PRESIDENT DID NOT GO AS FAR AS EC STATEMENT WHICH "ASKED FOR" PARTICIPATION OF ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, IN THE PEACE TALKS.

3. AHAM COMMENTARY SAYS PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT SHOWS HE UNDERSTANDS PALESTINIAN ISSUE IS CENTRAL TO FINAL SETTLEMENT AND CAN BE REGARDED AS "SOUND WAY TO APPROACH THE TRUTH", I.E., THAT PALESTINIANS MUST HAVE NATIONAL HOMELAND IF PEACE IS TO BE ACHIEVED. GUMHURIYYA EDITORIAL NOTES "IMPETUOUS ANGRY REACTIONS" FROM ISRAEL SHOULD NOT BE CRITERION FOR JUDGING MR. CARTER'S POLICY. STATEMENT ABOUT NATIONAL PALESTINIAN HOME IS "POSITIVE STEP...BUT IT REMAINS FOR THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT TO TAKE SUCH ACTION AS WILL ASSIST CREATION OF FREE, INDEPENDENT FULLY SOVERIEGN PALESTINIAN HOME".

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4. PALESTINIAN REACTION. PLO HAS SET UP SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO EVALUATE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT AND PNC DELEGATES CONCENTRATED ON ANALYZING ITS MEANING ON MARCH 18. MANY PNC DELEGATES ARE QUOTED IN MORNING PAPERS. MOST, INCLUDING SA'IQA'S MUHSIN, DESCRIBE STATEMENT AS POSITIVE SMALL STEP WHICH APPRECIATED. MOST, HOWEVER, COUPLE THEIR "WELCOME" WITH CONCERN THAT U.S. MAY NOT FOLLOW THROUGH. PNC SPOKESMAN TOLD PRESS ARAFAT IS PLEASED BUT WONDERS WHERE PRESIDENT THINKS HOMELAND MIGHT BE. MINORITY PFLP REACTION PREDICTABLY HOSTILE. NUMBER TWO DELEGATE QUOTED AS SAYING "WE HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN CARTER".

5. WHEN CHARGE GAVE FAHMY COPY EXCERPTS CLINTON SPEECH MORNING MARCH 19 (WE HAD SENT COPIES TO HIS OFFICE PREVIOUS DAY), FAHMY REMARKED THAT ARAFAT HAD BEEN SEVERELY CRITICIZED FOR "WELCOMING" STATEMENT ON HOMELAND, BUT THAT FAHMY PLEASED ARAFAT NOT TONING DOWN HIS PUBLIC STANCE.

CHAIRMAN OF PEOPLES ASSEMBLY FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE TELLS US THAT IN HIS APPEARANCE AT CLOSED SESSION OF COMMITTEE MARCH 19, ARAFAT WAS "VERY, VERY MODERATE" AND HAD EMPHASIZED THAT PALESTINIANS MUST BE REALISTIC ABOUT THEIR TERRITORIAL ASPIRATIONS.

6. CBS CAIRO BUREAU (STRICTLY PROTECT, INCLUDING NOT REVEALING TO CBS WASHINGTON/NY) HAS JUST INFORMED US THAT 90 MINUTE MIKE WALLACE INTERVIEW WITH ARAFAT EVENING MARCH 17 RESULTED IN MOST POSITIVE STATEMENTS "EVER MADE VIS A VIS US," ESPECIALLY RE PRESIDENT CARTER, WHO "COULD BE THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN OF THE PALESTINIANS." CBS NOW CONSIDERING BREAKING STORY ON CBS REGULAR NEWS BROADCAST, RATHER THAN ON 60 MINUTES PROGRAM NEXT WEEK.

7. COMMENT: PALESTINIAN REACTION PREDICTABLY MORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUSPICIOUS THAN GOE'S, AS NOTED IN OUR INITIAL REACTION REPORT (REFTEL). HAVING DECIDED PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT REPRESENTS UNEXPECTEDLY FORTHCOMING US POSITION, MODERATE PALESTINIANS ARE REPORTEDLY DISSECTING EVERY SYLLABLE AND HAVE BEGUN WORRY THAT "HOMELAND" MAY, IN USG OPINION, TURN OUT TO BE TRANSJORDAN. ANOTHER PROBABLE CONCERN OF PALESTINIANS, WHO HAVE FREQUENTLY SPOKEN AND WRITTEN OF HOW OVER THE YEARS THEIR HOPES FOR AMERICAN UNDERSTANDING HAVE BEEN DISSAPPOINTED, IS THAT USG MAY NOT STAY THE COURSE; I.E. WHILE MODERATES SEEM CONVINCED PRESIDENT CARTER IS SINCERE IN HIS SUPPORT FOR "HOMELAND", WHEN TIME COMES TO NEGOTIATE ITS EXISTENCE (AND "MODERATES" DEFINITION OF HOMELAND IS SOVEREIGN PALESTINIAN STATE), CARTER ADMINISTRATION WILL BE UNABLE OBTAIN NECESSARY PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL BACKING. PERHAPS ARAFAT'S APPEAL TO US JOURNALISTS (CAIRO 4433) FOR SUPPORT OF US PUBLIC SHOULD BE READ IN THIS CONTEXT. MATTHEWS

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